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Forest County Board
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Forest County Residents to Decide on Funding Request

The Forest County Board of Supervisors has approved a single ballot question on April 2, 2024 to increase the tax levy limit by \$2 million to cover increased operating costs and balance the county budget. This referendum is a last resort to provide a stable funding source that will allow the county to raise funds to cover operating costs that have increased due to inflation and the rising cost of goods and services.

“No one likes to pay more in taxes,” said Ron Skallerud, Forest County Supervisor for District 18. “We’ve done everything we can to cut our operational costs. Bottom line, it’s more expensive for us to fuel our squad cars, heat our buildings and pay our employees fair wages than it was a few years ago. We don’t see these costs going back down.”

The county is currently in good financial standing, but rising costs will outpace the current levy limit and deplete reserve funds. If this question does not pass, the county will need to balance the budget, which will mean significant reductions in important county services.

“Most people don’t realize the number of services our county provides,” said Skallerud. “From first responders to highway maintenance to programming for our seniors, the services we provide are important for the safety and well-being of our residents.”

Forest County is unique from other counties because about 83% of the land is owned by government entities, primarily the US Forest Service. That means about 17% of county land that pays property taxes needs to support 100% of the county government operations- including public safety, highway maintenance and social services.

What would this increase fund?

This referendum covers *operating* costs like salaries, insurance, facility maintenance and fuel for vehicles. It does not cover *capital* costs, which include large one-time purchases and new construction.

This referendum would eliminate the current operating deficit and provide additional funding to increase staff salaries to be more regionally competitive. Currently, Forest County salaries are lower than all neighboring counties, making it difficult to recruit and maintain quality staff.

The tax impact for a resident with a property value of \$100,000 would be less than \$10 per month starting in 2025.

The county is adding additional information about the referendum on its website,
<http://www.co.forest.wi.gov/>

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